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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 001005

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ES](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: EL SALVADOR: NATIONAL CIVILIAN POLICE DIRECTOR
RESIGNS

Classified By: Ambassador Glazer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Summary: National Civilian Police (PNC) Director Francisco Rovira resigned on Saturday, August 23, in the wake of media stories alleging abuse of authority and irregularities on the part of political appointees Rovira brought into the PNC. Deputy Director Jose Luis Tobar Prieto was named acting PNC Director. End summary.

¶2. (C) Rovira's stay at the PNC proved brief yet turbulent. Appointed to the position in February following Rodrigo Avila's decision to run for President, Rovira, who had no previous background in law enforcement, came to the PNC promising to focus on administration. Nonetheless, Rovira instituted significant organizational changes in the PNC and opted to move around senior PNC officials within weeks of assuming his position. He soon began personally leading high-profile police raids and immersing himself in tactical operations. The rank and file police appear never to have warmed to Rovira's hands-on management style, while mid-level career PNC officers allegedly became increasingly resentful of his involvement in operational issues. Rovira also had public differences of opinion with the Ministry of Public Security and Justice over the efficacy of his plan to decrease El Salvador's stubbornly high murder rate.

¶3. (C) Rovira's situation deteriorated rapidly on Friday, August 22, when the two major Salvadoran newspapers ran front page stories alleging that advisors he had brought into the PNC were abusing their authority: Wearing police uniforms, carrying badges, and using special license plates reserved for sworn law enforcement officials. One press report asserted that a career PNC official Rovira personally chose to oversee operations in Santa Ana department was receiving roughly double the salary he was entitled to. Other media stories linked the Rovira advisors to shady business deals that allegedly occurred during their prior government service, as well as improprieties in recent private sector activities. (Note: All of the above is at this point unsubstantiated press speculation. End note).

¶4. (C) The media scrutiny appears to have cost Rovira the support of Minister of Public Security and Justice Rene Figueroa. The newspaper reports on Friday all featured Figueroa quotes to the effect that Rovira's appointment and handling of his advisors would be "fully investigated." We have also heard speculation that Figueroa in fact pushed Rovira out the door, in effect demanding his resignation, which President Saca quickly accepted.

¶5. (C) Deputy Director Jose Luis Tobar Prieto, a career PNC officer well-known to the Embassy, was named Acting PNC Director. Minister Figueroa told the Embassy that Tobar Prieto would serve as Acting Director through the end of President Saca's term.

¶6. (C) Comment: Rovira's fall appears to be the result of his failing to win over the PNC leadership, compounded by a series of blunders which fatally damaged his credibility with the Ministry of Public Security and Justice, rather than an obvious instance of corruption. Rovira's mishandling of his advisors served as a handy pretext for the Saca administration to reverse an ill-advised appointment to one of El Salvador's most important governmental positions. End comment.

GLAZER